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ABSTRACT

A study examined the conditions of education and the status of children's literature in Argentina, a country currently ruled by a military junta. Specifically, the study investigated how children's literature affected school curriculum; what themes were considered to be important; the roles of ethnic, female, and historical characters; and how teachers were prepared to introduce and make use of children's literature in the schools. The procedures used in the study included interviews with staff members of teacher training, curriculum development, and research at the National Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Education of Buenos Aires province; interviews with individual authors, editors, and publishers of children's books; and visits to teacher training institutions. Among the findings of the study were the following: (1) the children's literature showed little evidence of racism--however, the indigenous peoples of Argentina were rarely mentioned in the works; (2) in most books for children, boys were predominate as heroes and doers, while girls were shown as sisters, mothers, and teachers and were usually depicted as passive; and (3) historical characters were often shown to be "larger than life." Overall, the literature displayed much art, craft, and skill, with only occasional excursions into controversial social topics. (FL)

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# EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN THE ARGENTINE CONTEXT

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

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EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN THE ARGENTINE CONTEXT

I Introduction This report is based upon my visit to Buenos Aires where I spent three months in 1980 as Senior Fulbright Research Fellow. The studies I undertook were made possible by the United States Fulbright Commission with the agreement of the Argentine government and its counterpart Commission.

The purpose of the study was to examine the conditions of education and the status of children's literature in recent and current Argentine contexts. In this research, it was of particular interest to determine how children's literature affected school curriculum, what themes were considered to be important, what were the roles of ethnic, female, historical characters, and how teachers were prepared to introduce and make use of children's literature in the schools.

The procedures of this research included: interviews with staffs for teacher training, curriculum development, and research of the national ministry of education and of the ministry

of education of Buenos Aires Province; interviews with individual authors of children's books and with editors and publishers; examination and analysis of children's books; visits to teacher-training institutions.

During the period, I visited 25 to 30 writers in their homes, in restaurants, and in writers' meetings. I met with about 25 editors, publishers, and education officials in their offices or at conferences.

This report will cover the following topics:

The current context of Argentina.

Education in Argentina.

Publishing for children and educational practices.

Children's literature: writers and concepts.

Conclusions.

II Argentina, the current context. In Argentina today, control is maintained by a military junta which took power by force in 1976 during a period of prolonged armed hostility and which now enforces its edicts without representative government. There is no national Congress nor are there political parties seeking adherents, publishing newspapers and journals, and planning to contest elections.

In this century, military coups brought about changes in political power in 1930, 1943 (Peron), 1955, 1962, 1966, 1970, 1971, 1976. Peron, who was ousted in 1955, was legally elected in 1973. Following his death in 1974, his wife (and Vice President) assumed

the Presidency, to be deposed by the military in 1976. It is this junta, led by representatives of the three major services, which continues to govern at this time.

In its control, the government exerts dominion over newspapers, radio, television, and other media of communication. With the growth of television to four channels (in color), the government has indicated its more-than-tacit connection with the Roman Catholic Church by assigning to each channel a clergyman-advisor. This delegate is to review materials which affect religion, but the influence appears to be pervasive.

While clerical reviewers are not in evidence on newspaper staffs or in publishing houses, strict hewing to an explicit "line" is evident. This is most clearly seen in newspaper accounts of events in the nation; reporting of foreign affairs is ambivalent toward Soviet or Cuban matters. Recent disagreements with Chile over territory have been given full, nationalist treatment. In general, news media are neutral if not tolerant toward the United States.

Magazines may take individual attitudes on national matters, even to the point of cartooning the figures of members of the junta but using avuncular images rather than unfriendly ones. One or two journals show striking interest in anti-Semitism, focusing on "Jewish" physiognomies, mocking the bustle of the major Jewish business district in Buenos Aires, and deploring the activities of the Jewish community representatives when they express concern about particular events which trouble them as Argentine citizens.[1] These concerns may range from the need for

police protection against synagogue bombings and swastika-defacings of residences to curricular requirements in the schools that fail to take note of Jewish religious practices and sensitivities. Street and subway kiosks display the scurrilous "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" for sale alongside other journals, pamphlets, and newspapers.

The Jewish community freely publishes at least a half-dozen journals and newspapers each month, with full expression of its varied interests but with no criticism of the government.

Other religious and ethnic groups in Argentina have freedom to publish with similar self-imposed restrictions that come from either explicit experience in the current context or from the self-taught tendencies toward caution.

Publishers of children's books are subject to review of their planned publications by a special Ministry of Education commission. This body examines materials submitted and decrees acceptance or prohibition. A book may be totally prohibited or may only be barred from use in the schools, with public sales permitted. The commission deals with books already in print and may take similar decisions.[2]

The political context of Argentina today is, therefore, of a military authority with close clerical ties, allowing no opposition parties or organizations. A major aspect is the maintenance of a system of internal review and the swift response to presumed anti-government activity. Over the past several years, thousands of alleged anti-government guerrillas have been

arrested or abducted. Many were tortured or murdered because of suspected ties to militant left-wing organizations. Among such victims have been university teachers and students, labor leaders and ordinary workers, including many Jews. Few have been tried, few released, thus the reference to the "disappeared ones" whom families and friends continue to seek. At the time of this writer's stay in Argentina, some prisoners were being brought to trial, some released, with no explanation given by the authorities of the fate of most. Individuals now continue to be arrested, subjected to explicit charges, with apparent due process, and with reports of such events in the press. Others continue to disappear.

It is under these conditions that Argentines live, with little evidence of anticipated change. A current comment states, "Argentina's president in the year 2000 is now in the military academy."

People travel freely, earn their money by labor or business, intellect or investment, seek education through the highest levels, read what they can, and (in the capital) find art, music, dance, and drama of the highest order. They engage in commerce, culture, and conspicuous consumption, but they do not engage in politics. Another saying, "Argentines today thrive on pan y cine," refers to the full attendance at all kinds of cultural performances, especially the movies, and the overflowing restaurants at mid-day and very late evening.

III Education. Among Latin American nations, Argentina is noted for the relatively high quality of, and open access to, its programs in education. Education reflects the political and social condition. Universities flourish, enrollments are as high as ever and growing, graduates excel in the sciences, architecture, the liberal arts, and education. The estimated level of literacy in the nation is over 90 per cent.

But the gregarious students and their teachers, teeming in Buenos Aires expecially, addicted to politics and political advocacies, do not now have the opportunity or the time for either. As observed by an outsider, the universities are "strictly business".

As to the overall system, Argentine education is based upon the traditional national ministry, seated in the capital. As a recent innovation, each of the provinces now has its own ministry of education. This is, apparently, to de-centralize control over local situations. HOwever, such "provincialization" may also be seen as a way of indicating that education will be attended to by local authorities who will be directly responsible for the implementation of national level decisions.

Suffering as Argentina does from an over-concentration of population in the province of Buenos Aires, it seems reasonable to emphasize the values of a ministry of education in each province. This development may draw families away from the metropolitan center toward the less-populated regions which have rich potential in natural resources but which lack resident manpower and established families for their development.

The structure and sequence of the school system include a 7-year primary school followed by a 5-year secondary school. A distinction is made between "higher" education (for teacher training and certain other specializations) and "university" education which is also post-secondary. Thus a secondary school graduate may opt for either one, depending upon interests and qualifications.

In July 1980, the Ministerio de Cultura y Educación (national) published data on school enrollments and other aspects of the system. See Tables 1, 2, and 3.

Tables 1 and 2 show a continuing increase in enrollments at the primary and secondary levels, with higher education relatively stable. It is worthy of note that at the secondary level, girls outnumber boys, 52.8 per cent of enrollment.

Table 3 shows that women predominate as teachers in all levels. Data for the universities were not available.

Private education, as shown in Table 4, plays a major role in secondary education, with 68.7 per cent of the enrollment at that level. This seems to indicate the willingness of families to accept additional costs and demonstrates a special attitude toward the public schools at this level. While data were not available as to single sex schools at the secondary level, their prevalence in the private schools may be assumed. Secondary level data are in contrast with private enrollments at 16.8 per cent of the total in primary education and 13.1 per cent at the university and non-university post-secondary at 28.2 per cent.

Retention rates (or the concept of wastage) are shown in Tables 5 and 6. For a given cohort, at the end of the seven years of primary school, 56 per cent of the girls remain, with 48.7 per cent of the boys still in school.

At the secondary level, at the fifth year 62.9 per cent of the girls are retained along with 56.5 per cent of the boys of the same cohort. In contrast with this information, we note that more boys than girls are enrolled in post-secondary education. See Table 2.

In general, the Argentine school situation is one in which ever-greater numbers are enrolled. We do not have age-group data, but the educational pyramid becomes sharper in the secondary and higher education levels. We note that large numbers of girls and women attain professional status, particularly within the ranks of teachers at all levels. Student drop-outs, boys as well as girls, appear to be excessively high at both the primary and secondary levels, indicating a possible influx into the labor market of relatively unskilled workers. This may be reflected in the large numbers of young couples where both are employed, with few children or none. The influences and effects of culture, parental influences, and work opportunities deserve further, more detailed examination.

Argentina is ranked with Uruguay and Venezuela by the World Bank as to the highest per capita incomes in Latin America.[3] Retention rates of a primary level cohort (52.2 per cent) are lower than those for the two countries mentioned. which are at 94.2 per cent and 61.7 per cent, respectively. Enrollments in private

education are similar (16 per cent) at the primary level, but Argentina far exceeds the other two, having 67.7 per cent private secondary level enrollment, compared with about 18 per cent for Uruguay and Venezuela.

IV Publishing for children and the educational system. On July 13, 1980, La Nacion of Buenos Aires, in its Sunday color-illustrated supplement took three pages to present, "The Children do not Read. Why?"

La Razon, on August 2, dedicated one-fourth of a page to its "Weekly Inquiry: The Problems of Children's Literature".

Throughout the year, journals, newspapers, and conferences deal with the same problem in similar terms. Children are not reading. They have discovered television and, with the acquiescence of their parents, spend more hours in passive observation than they do in reading. In all of the discussions by journalists, teachers, authors, and editors, several considerations are stressed.

First, children in their early years are deprived of parent conversation and of the traditional "read-to-me-mother" experience. Neither mothers nor fathers are spending time in conversation with their children or in the close physical comfort of reading them stories. Parents, therefore, instead of "surrounding their children" with books, use the television as a means of managing their time as well as the children's. In their later years, as children have mastered the skills of reading, there are temptations which include more than television. Children and adolescents

consider athletics with their peers as well as more passive activities, and lessons in extra subjects such as music, dance, art, to be more attractive.

Thus the home environment itself, with parents as responsibles, fails to encourage a love for reading in the children.

Secondly, editors claim that markets for sales of children's books continue to be precarious, making their ventures in this medium excessively risky. Bookstores crowd out their few children's books with magazines and adult reading materials. The cost of production in Argentina, due to economic conditions, are extremely high, and Spanish and Mexican editions offer artificially-priced competition.

A report by the Argentine Book Association offers interesting data on books for children and adolescents. See Table 7.

The numbers of books and titles published appear to be respectable and even show an increase in copies distributed. The data do not indicate the age groups for which the books are published. Nevertheless, our observations indicate a reasonable distribution among picture-books with almost no text, storybooks with pictures and some text, collections of tales, and series-type books for adolescents. Our conclusions might be that the publishers are anticipating a loss of sales as book prices for children continue to rise from about $10 US per copy. This in a market where paperbacks for adults begin at about the same price.

Further, publishers' comments about the hardships of their trade often serve to subdue writers who might hope for increases in royalties as their share of publishers' receipts. Several publishers

expressed their dependence for profits on sales from other lines, adult books, school texts, and encyclopedias.

Thirdly, it was generally acknowledged that the school plays a minimal role in animating or strengthening children's love for books. There is the fully-demanding curriculum, in both the primary and secondary levels, which does not leave time for comfortable examination of recent and current children's literature. Although literature is in the curriculum from the early grades, selections for reading are "traditional" stories and poetry. When students are subjected to the required analysis, review, and discussion of these extracts, even the most dedicated child may lose enthusiasm for reading. (Many children's books of good quality include pages in the front which invite the young reader to analyze the story, to answer questions about it, and to write to the kindly Miss X, the editor. All this before the story begins.)

For the most part, teachers receive no preparation for understanding, knowing, and sharing children's literature with their classes. In most schools, the curriculum is followed explicitly and there is little time or space for such "outside" reading by the students. Informants report that some in-service education for teachers, especially in primary schools, covers the use of children's books in schools and emphasizes their value for young readers. Such self-development by teachers will depend upon the availability of their time (many teachers teach in more than one school to augment their salaries), their perception of this topic as a priority for them, and the access to such courses and to books.

In some instances, publishers (Kapelusz and Plus Ultra, for example) organize teachers' meetings in which recent publications are presented and sample copies are offered at little or no cost. Such promotional activities are undertaken by representatives who also sell books and textbooks to bookstores on behalf of their companies. Since texts in the schools are not free, ministry-approved, teacher-selected texts are listed for parents to purchase. In this way, teachers are able to collect some children's books for possible use with children, for collections in the "class library", or for personal use. Some publishers continue to maintain their contacts with teachers and other school personnel through the distribution of catalogues, while Kapelusz distributes its journal, Limen, Revista de Orientacion Didactica, offering articles by teachers and others on reading, Argentine heroes, and other themes. Sprinkled throughout are advertisements for books by the publisher.

Of special interest, however, are several journals that appear to have professional standing. Proyecciones de la Lectura, published by the Argentine Reading Association, is a quarterly journal on reading, children's literature, and research, containing no advertising.

Aletheia is a new journal (October 1979), published by the Instituto Nacional Superior de Profesorado de Jardin de Infantes, a teacher-training college for kindergarten teachers. The journal deals with pre-school education and includes articles on curriculum, teacher training, and poetry for children. It contains no advertising.

El Loro Pelado, a well-illustrated, well-written journal, focuses on all aspects of culture for children, though it is not a children's magazine. Dealing with children's literature, music, film, theater, puppets, etc., its articles review and explore these areas for teachers, practitioners, and other interested adults. El Loro Pelado includes advertising for sellers of books, records, and educational toys.

La Obra, Revista de Educación is a journal which stresses a particular theme in each issue, ranging from measurement, through reading, the life of San Martin, to animal biology. For teachers interested in children's literature, La Obra thus far offers little.

A publication of the National Ministry of Education, Revista Nacional de Cultura, contains articles referring to history, architecture, and philosophy. Its issue No. 4, Volume 1 (1979) features an article (on distinctive blue paper), "Critical Aspects of Written Material for Children". While it is not certain that future issues of the Revista will carry such items, this one is aimed at teachers, parents, and, it would appear, authors and publishers. At this point, reference is made to this journal and to the others above as examples of what teachers will find on children's literature. While orientation for teachers is generally meager in the training institutions, journals of description and review seem to be available and growing in size and number.

Fourthly, the virtual absence of true, public, lending libraries is an obstacle to the development of children's interests in literature, to say nothing of access to reading for adults. Various

agencies and ministries in the capital operate dependent libraries which are open to the public. The one we visited in the Ministry of Education building catered to adults in its main section, with a smaller room that contained a collection of children's books, plays, and texts. There were six children in the room who moved from one set of shelves to another, examining books, some of which were quite recent.

In this case, as in all other libraries we inquired about, books may be read on the premises but could not be removed for home reading. Coupled with their insufficiency in numbers is their location in non-residential neighborhoods. The non-lending policy of libraries in the capital frustrates all who cannot buy in the bookstores. It may be another fact of cultural and economic life in Argentina that adequate lending libraries of circulating children's books might threaten sales in bookstores. In the regions of the country away from the capital, bookstores remain the only source of books for children.

Mention was made by informants of some schools having "school libraries" as well as "class libraries". These were, however, quickly described as meager, subject to teacher or parent funding, and generally received as donations with little awareness of quality standards.

As has been indicated earlier, publishers offer children's books in increasing numbers. From examination of many such books, this reviewer notes that the publishers' interest is to attempt to combine the "creative" with the didactic. Something is to be taught: sympathy for the unsuccessful; patience for good things to happen;

respect for one another; the values of cooperation; and so on. The lives of Argentine heroes, nineteenth-century politicians and soldiers, scientists like Einstein and Salk, are also a part of these didactic tendencies.

Publishers focus on developing "collections", or series, of storybooks for a particular age group, usually identified with a "logo" and a uniform format. These books may be traditional fairy-tales, anthologies of stories, or original works by Argentines and others. There is generally a unifying theme, on-going characters, or other connections between the books in a series.

Each collection has its own editor or director who may include works of his or her own in the series. Other authors represented are, it has been stated, friends of the editor or in some way continuing collaborators. Rarely do authors from one publisher's collections appear in the series of another publisher. We might say that there are "stables" of established authors whose works continue to appear under the same imprint.

So-called "free-lance" authors, not attached to a publisher's "stable", seek to become directors or editors of collections themselves, and so become published along with those whom they will choose to contract for books in <u>their</u> series.

For some publishers, the costs of producing a book may be such as to require the monetary "collaboration" of the author, especially for a non-series book. A number of children's book authors informed me that such had been their experience with more than one publisher. (While "vanity" publishing is found in Argentina, it does not appear

to be a phenomenon among children's books.) Following such publication, the author would then receive royalties, if any, as in all commercial publishing.

It is necessary to note that, in the present Argentine context, publishers of children's books take great care to protect their investments. Children's books, intended for use in the schools, must be submitted for review by ministerial commissions prior to their actual publication. These reviews will include children's literature since teachers in the schools may suggest such books for recreational or class reading, or for inclusion in class and school libraries.

Books intended for sale in kiosks or in bookstores need not be submitted for review. Nevertheless, there have been instances when such books, once placed on sale, have been banned from distribution.

With such experiences, publishers learn to be thoughtful, well-disciplined, and cautious in advance. In either instance (whether for school use or for general public sale), publishers and editors now consider the topics that might be offensive. These may include mention of strikes, labor unrest, or similar problems in the world of work; reference to military or police or bureaucratic practices; and similarly provocative themes. One author said that her editor had insisted, out of caution, that she change the name of a character, a physician, in one of her children's books. The name was "too Jewish".

It is difficult to determine who draws the line finally, the

editor-publisher or the arm of the government which may find a piece of writing threatening to public order.

A book was banned after publication because one of its stories described how the animals in a circus went on strike and took over the circus.

Having been awarded a literary prize in Cuba for a children's book, one author found that her next book was peremptorily prohibited from circulation in Argentina. She thus lost the benefits from both the prize book and its successor, neither of which could be sold in her own country.. Other books by this author have since been safely published.

A third book, translated from the original French edition, was prohibited although it was a charming, artistically illustrated and sensitive narrative about love and how babies are made. As a "sex guide" for children, the book may have offended because nude, embracing adults (showing only the upper torso) were shown two pages before their presentation in nuptial garb. A further problem for censors may have arisen in the statement that the "two cells (egg and sperm) can be prevented from meeting".

Another example concerns a publisher who imported a children's book which was promptly banned. The publisher was jailed for a brief period and upon release promptly left the country. The company still publishes, with direction from the non-resident owners. It publishes few children's books since the schools will not accept them, but it appears to carry on successfully because of its rights in several popular adult titles.

Editors and writers were generally open in their statements that they had eventually learned to practice self-censorship over their children's books, thus avoiding costly experiences from a financial standpoint if not from the possibility of incarceration. Few were open, however, in offering copies of banned children's books to this writer; it was a matter of caution to indicate that one did not have such books.

There were a number of publishers and editors who did not discuss banned children's books or the possibilities of their existence. Their publications were always in circulation, had never been challenged, and were generally selling well. Such security was achieved by holding to safe themes and concepts in their publications.

V Children's literature: writers and concepts. The works of Argentine authors tend to resemble those of writers for children in other relatively advanced countries. There are strikingly beautiful books with stories of adventure that are intriguing, amusing, and well-written. Then there are the pedestrian, ordinary, interesting (but just that) stories and poems. Both types may be found on sale in bookstores, yet this reviewer of children's literature and, occasionally, authors themselves made note of this distinction.

There are several prolific, well-known, and distinguished writers for children. On interviewing most of them, we inquired as to their views and comments on various matters and as to their parti-

cular interests. Initially, one hears generalizations about writing for children and the purposes and condition of children's literature. In all cases, comments were made about the perfidious effects of television on children and the need to educate parents toward good reading.

On the purposes of children's literature, Maria Hortensia Lacau said, "It is the great task of literature to begin furnishing the child's soul with valid contents, to begin to awaken the inner life early by means of a friendly reality, truthful, but without utilitarian purposes..."

Lacau, editor of the publishing house Plus Ultra, has directed the publication of such work on children's literature as Juguemos a Imaginar (Aaron Cupit), La Literatura Infantil en la Escuela Primaria (Maria R. P. Belgrano), and El Cuento Maravilloso Infantil y su Sintaxis Narrativa (Mabel V. M. de Rosetti). These are didactic, analytic, and bibliographic works aimed at teachers. Lacau is, in addition, a fine poet and storyteller.

Graciela Montes, editor of children's books for Centro Editor Latino and a writer, expressed similar views. She said, "...there appears to be an ideological conflict in children's literature between those who prefer to deal with 'tradition' and those who stress 'reality'."

Montes anticipates a continuing emphasis on children's books which will reflect the national culture: history of the Nation, its heroes, and locales for stories in the regions and cities of Argentina.

Maria Elena Walsh, a popular writer, musican, and performer,

said that her own interest was apart from what might be termed the "national reality". She urged that authors seek to be creative and contemporary from a literary standpoint. In her work, Chaucha y Palito (1977), she presents several stories, essentially humorous and fantastic, with exceptionally beautiful illustrations. She begins the collection with the following:

"Chaucha and Palito were perhaps aunt and nephew. Or mother and son...It is not certain because no one asked them...

"Since everyone came and went rapidly, looking at their watches, and papers, and ...machines, no one paid them any attention.

"And this attention is something that is only loaned when actually shouldn't it be given to those who need it?

"No. In that city attention was not even loaned, it was sold.

"That's how Chaucha and Palito became invisible.

"Invisible to adults, but not to the children..."

With this introduction, the two take off on a magic carpet and tell the stories that follow, and the readers are invited to fly with them. But they are reminded that they should have their dictionaries on hand.

Walsh points out to the young reader that "the dictionary is one of the child's best friends, in the opinion of a bird called Pepéluis. It never says it is busy and has no time to answer a question. Besides, it knows how to close its cover when you are tired or feel like doing something else."

A didactic admonition indeed!

The five stories are told as modern fairy tales in contemporary scenes, tales of magic, of adventure, of misunderstandings corrected.

In them all, there are invented characters, talking animals, and statements in favor of cooperation, learning for its own sake, and friendly confrontations that are happily resolved. The writing style is conversational, somewhat avuncular, and quite appealing to children. The artistry and creativity of the author are apparent.

The final story is the author's autobiography, offered in response to children's requests. This personal history is both interesting and well told. She concludes, "I do not care for contests or prizes. We artists are not prizefighters. We do not need to compete against one another so as to win...

"Artists...and scholars, students, and researchers...only need moral and financial stimulus, especially when they begin. And they receive it because they need and deserve it, not because they have won a race, triumphing over others to be first."

At the conclusion of her autobiography, Walsh provides (in this children's book) a list of her books for adults as well as her other books for children.

Syria Poletti writes a charming adventure-mystery story, The Mystery of the Green Suitcases (1979), about a family of traveling puppeteers. At one railway stop their green suitcase is mistakenly exchanged with an identical one filled with stolen money, the property of robbers who are also on the train. The development of the story is humorous and effective.

Poletti, at one point, interrupts her main plot by having one of her characters, Peluso, find a suitcase with some letters and strange documents. We then have a story-within-a-story in which

we learn of some extra-terrestrial beings who, more advanced than we, have been able to observe the planet Earth and have written to their invisible envoy here. They are angry over the growing "evils of mankind: war, killing, hunger, violence... injustice...and, finally, the danger of atomic war."

In order to maintain order in the "cosmos" and "harmony in the universe", it has become necessary to destroy this planet: "Let us finish with this absurd species...Let us destroy that planet once and for all."

But a child of that distant world begs for another chance for Earth. He pleads that he be allowed to visit (invisibly, of course) some city or a region and if he finds there "something good, something that deserves to survive over time and space, something that proves that humans also have spirit and feel the throb of the universe", then they will not destroy Earth.

The authorities agree and the young explorer comes invisibly to Earth. He studies in all continents and finds something that exists in no other planet: music. He finds the arts, painting, sculpture, poetry, theater, dance.

"Perhaps this was their way of coming close to God, like prayer which always comes from within."

The Earth, in spite of the evils despaired of, also has compensating beauty. It is not destroyed because it has the arts.

And so, having read this in the documents he has found, Peluso is relieved that the danger has passed. Poletti resumes the main story with the puppeteers rising to new heights of artistry and

the robbers finding their deserved reward in prison.

Thus we note the desire of authors (including the most successful and respected) to present personal statements to the extent of the non-subtle autobiographical chapter or the intruded "story-within-a-story". Notwithstanding one's probable agreement with the ethical precepts offered, we may hope for more creative, character-focused presentations to convey the authors' views.

In one of the finest works we encountered, Bilembambudin (1979), Elsa Bornemann approaches the qualities of Alice in Wonderland, The Wizard of Oz, and Gulliver's Travels. Bornemann tells her story of the magical adventures of a young girl (herself as a child, says Bornemann with tongue, perhaps, in cheek). In the story, people act foolishly, wisely, and with humorous results. She places her characters in touch with mythological situations (the discovery of fire; wind as a personified element,) and within a modern but somewhat out-of-focus kingdom. The land of Bilembambudin is governed by King Tasilo, the 99th, who is only 99 centimeters tall. He has united his people,--against him. He is an enemy of nature, having despoiled the ecology with smoking chimneys, contaminated rivers, and too much noise.

Thus Bornemann effectively inserts her heroine as a bold warrior against the "locos" who despoil the earth. Using "newspaper" articles and announcements, she moves the narrative toward a reform of the King who believes he is more powerful than Nature herself. Aldana, the girl, undergoes many mild dangers, most of them presented by bigoted giants, some by thoughtless or ignorant

characters. In the end, she returns from her fantasy to the everyday life she leads among adults in Buenos Aires. But sometimes she finds Bilembambudin even there, she says.

For this reader, the tale is an outstanding one, even with its attention to ecological concerns. It is written at the child's level though causing the child to "stretch" for words and concepts. The writer's art pervades the work in which the whole is indeed greater than its parts.

Bornemann, who is also director of children's books for the publisher Ediciones Librerias Fausto, has an equally notable work in El Libro de los Chicos Enamorados (1979)(the book of children in love), a book of poems for children about loving one another. A most wholesome item!

In her Poesia Infantil (1976), she presents a collection of poetry with a preface in which she describes and discusses types of poetry and their most effective use with children. She is professionally correct in these discussions of poetry for children and the ways to present poetic forms that will encourage their early creative participation.

But it is in the collection itself that we find interest. Her authors are all Latin American and Spanish. (Can it be that there are no Mexican poets who write for children?!) Bornemann's own "Cuentito" is a charming example, from which we quote only this excerpt:

"Una mañanica
de primavérica

Hallé una láuchica
en la verédica
.....
No, no es mentírica
---cara de tórtica---
¿No crees nádica?
¡Pues no me impórtica!"

In her stories, Bornemann's characters are more often girls than boys, but equal time is given to the needs of the action.

We could go on to analyze the works of individual writers and to note their distinctiveness as well as their common elements. We would refer to the thoughtful and eloquent verses of Ines Malinow, the fantastic creativity of Aaron Cupit and his co-author Susana Gesumaria, the charming tales of Laura Devetach, the well-wrought artistry of Susana Itzcovich, the beautifully worked adventure stories of Maria Alicia Dominguez and the young Olga Eugenia Flores.

In all these instances, the literary achievements and talents of Argentine writers for children are second to none.

Special note should be made of the activities of the Instituto Summa which, under the leadership of famed author-storyteller Martha Salotti and teacher-author Dora P. de Etchebarne, offers courses and activities in children's literature. The Instituto has developed a department of critical review in which a systematic and continuing archive is maintained for the review and analysis of publications for children.

This organization has the potential for providing initiative in expanding the work of orienting teachers, parents, and the community toward literature for children. Its staff offer courses for professionals in literature and storytelling, conduct a library for children and youth, and provide stimulus for interest in this field throughout the country by the publication of Ludo, the bulletin of the Instituto. It would appear that the efforts of the Instituto Summa could serve as a model for similar work on the part of the national Ministry of Culture and Education and its provincial counterparts.

VI Conclusions. The foregoing report has been based upon the initial premise upon which the research was undertaken: that examination and analysis of children's literature within the current Argentine context would yield important data about how authors work, and why, and what editors finally publish as literature for children, and about the educational system's response to such literature.

This educator-author's instincts are aroused to reflect upon his own context and its literature and then to draw further parallels. Thus, the American researcher looks, listens, and learns within the Argentine situation while almost simultaneously reaching for signs of familiarity and difference.

Assimilating as he goes, he reaches toward the data he may already have on situations beyond the United States, but more like it than others: western Europe, notably England, France,

West Germany, Italy, and Scandinavia. To make further comparative studies relating to the Eastern Bloc or to the rest of Latin America would be to enter into rather complex problems and conditions. Thus, we resist and maintain the limitations indicated, anticipating other studies yet to be done.

With reference to some concerns of United States educators, writers, and critics, Argentine literature for children shows little evidence of racism. The indigenous peoples of Argentina have been eliminated or have withdrawn to remote areas where they are referred to as "primitives" or "aborigines". Literature for children rarely touches on such groups except in some historical stories for older children. Specific references to the "people of the forests" and the "wild lands" are made as these people may have cooperated or hindered the activities of Spanish and Argentine settlers and developers.

While few blacks are seen in Buenos Aires, some recent books for children show them in the illustrations without reference in the text. One story for teen-agers, by a Venezuelan but selling well in Argentina, describes a "negrito" youth who works with whites on building construction. He befriends one fellow-worker whose sister he marries against opposition, goes off to settle happily in his home town.[4] Authors, discussing racism, do not see this situation as an "Argentine reality".

In most cases observed in children's books, boys predominate as heroes and doers; girls play their part as sister, mother, teacher, but seldom taking the initiative in the action.

The girl is usually passive in following her brother or neighbor to whatever activities interest him; often, he is going to do something that she is sure their parents will frown upon: he wants to go far from their place of play; he wants to invite strange animals to join them; he drives the car or the plane; or something similar. The girls act as restraints upon the boys. They are usually the mother of them both, with all the dialogue that is thereby implied. The female offers approval, gives suggestions that seem to be rather authoritative in tone, finally wraps up the story if there have been any difficulties or misunderstandings.

Women are rarely shown in roles that have called for much more than basic education,--this in a nation where more girls than boys complete the secondary school and where women architects, physicians, and business executives are not an unusual sight.

As regards Argentine history, children's books show national heroes in detailed discussions, dialogues, and debate. They are not often self-doubting but seem to have their plans fully thought out. Yet their concerns for individuals, for family, and for the Nation are given in simple and direct fashion. Thus, in almost all aspects, men like Rivadavia, Sarmiento, San Martin are larger than life and indeed heroes, as yet not subject to "demythifying" in North American style.

To conclude, Argentine literature for children is more allied with similar literature in other Latin American countries than with that in non-Iberian western Europe. There is much art, craft,

and skill, with only occasional tangential excursions into the controversial (and important) social topics now much developed in western nations.

Surely, the limitations of the Argentine political context are basic to the condition of children's literature as well as to most literature in that country. Publication and dissemination are, after all, the goals of authors and editors; without them no word or idea is conveyed. Creative people have learned their lesson well. Yet their artistic efforts persist and they continue to seek a responsive readership in spite of the odds against them. They explore the universe of the child; they enrich and encourage the family; they tend to ignore the school; and they make little reference to current national politics or economics. The historical that is dealt with remains well apart from the current scene.

As long as the "president of Argentina in the year 2000 is to be a graduate of the military academy", the works of children's literature will be artistic, beautiful in concept, yet earth-bound and with a muted voice.

#

Table 1. Educational Statistics, 1979, estimated.

| Level | Students | Of which private |
|---|---|---|
| Primary | 4,003,670 | 685,203 |
| Secondary | 1,295,815 | 400,499 |
| Higher | 475,799 | 103,019 |
| University | 389,249 | 74,284 |
| Non-university | 86,550 | 28,735 |

Table 2. Educational Statistics, 1973-1979, Boys and Girls compared (thousands)

| Year | Primary | Boys | Girls | % Girls | Secondary | Boys | Girls | % Girls | Higher | Boys | Girls | % Girls |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1973 | 3,728 | 1,929 | 1,799 | 48.3 | 1,124 | 540 | 583 | 51.9 | 432 | 232 | 200 | 46.3 |
| 1974 | 3,771 | 1,949 | 1,822 | 48.3 | 1,208 | 580 | 628 | 51.9 | 542 | 294 | 248 | 45.8 |
| 1975 | 3,805 | 1,958 | 1,846 | 48.5 | 1,243 | 592 | 650 | 52.3 | 596 | 312 | 283 | 47.5 |
| 1976 | 3,832 | 1,979 | 1,852 | 48.3 | 1,283 | 609 | 673 | 52.5 | 600 | 313 | 286 | 47.7 |
| 1977 | 3,884 | 2,000 | 1,883 | 48.5 | 1,288 | 607 | 680 | 52.8 | 536 | 280 | 255 | 47.6 |

Table 3. Teachers, Year, Sex, Level

| Year | Primary | | Secondary | | Superior (non-university only) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | M | F | M | F | M | F |
| 1973 | 17,719 | 185,264 | 55,572 | 91,295 | 6,736 | 47,952 |
| 1974 | 17,621 | 188,827 | 58,348 | 96,503 | 7,143 | 50,531 |
| 1975 | 18,502 | 197,647 | 60,643 | 101,216 | 7,730 | 52,047 |
| 1976 | 18,485 | 201,390 | 63,924 | 104,808 | 9,563 | 58,680 |
| 1977 | 18,047 | 199,818 | 63,253 | 110,461 | 9,248 | 62,035 |

Table 4. Students enrolled in private education, as part of total enrollment, 1973-1977. (thousands).

| Year | Primary | | | Secondary | | | Higher Education | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | University | | | Non-University | | |
| | Totals | Of which private | % private | Totals | Of which private | % private | Totals | Of which priva | % pvt. | Totals | Of which private | % private |
| 1973 | 3,728 | 587 | 15.7 | 528 | 359 | 67.9 | 377 | 50 | 13.3 | 54 | 17 | 31.5 |
| 1974 | 3,771 | 605 | 16.0 | 563 | 376 | 66.8 | 484 | 52 | 10.7 | 57 | 16 | 28.1 |
| 1975 | 3,805 | 625 | 16.4 | 574 | 384 | 66.9 | 536 | 55 | 10.3 | 59 | 17 | 28.8 |
| 1976 | 3,832 | 629 | 16.4 | 583 | 390 | 66.9 | 532 | 58 | 10.9 | 68 | 18 | 26.5 |
| 1977 | 3,884 | 654 | 16.8 | 578 | 397 | 68.7 | 465 | 61 | 13.1 | 71 | 20 | 28.2 |

* Table 5. School Retention and Drop-outs, Primary, Totals, Boys, Girls, 1971-1977 (one cohort) (thousands):

| | 1971-grade 1 | 1972-grade 2 | 1973-grade 3 | 1974-grade 4 | 1975-grade 5 | 1976-grade 6 | 1977-grade 7 | % retained |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Totals | 733 | 576 | 534 | 496 | 457 | 417 | 382 | 52.1 |
| Boys | 384 | 298 | 272 | 251 | 228 | 207 | 187 | 48.7 |
| Girls | 348 | 278 | 261 | 244 | 228 | 210 | 195 | 56.0 |

*Retencion y Desgranamiento, Cohorte 1971-1977, Ministerio de Cultura y Educacion, 1978.

* Table 6. School Retention and Drop-outs, Secondary (pre-higher education cycle)
Totals, Boys, Girls, 1974-1978 (one cohort)

| | 1974-1st year | 1975-2nd year | 1976-3rd year | 1977-4th year | 1978-5th year | % retained |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Totals | 112,135 | 98,647 | 88,222 | 80,813 | 67,730 | 60.4 |
| Boys | 44,819 | 38,749 | 33,824 | 31,122 | 25,343 | 56.5 |
| Girls | 67,316 | 59,898 | 54,398 | 49,691 | 42,387 | 62.9 |

*Retencion y Desgranamiento, Cohorte 1974-1978, Ministerio de Cultura y Educacion, 1979.

Footnotes:

1. Quijano, Alonso, "Cosas Veredes Sancho...", Cabildo, December 1979-January 1980. P. 7. The author speaks of the synonyms "Jew" and "merchant". He decries the conversion of Argentina into a market in which "Jews act with impunity". 'Perhaps that is why," says Quijano in this boxed article, the AMIA (Jewish community council) can "propose a Jewish education for our fatherland." The article is based upon objections by AMIA to a new curriculum of "Moral and Civic Education" in which Catholic tenets involve all pupils in all schools, including the Jewish ones. Quijano concludes by stating that "It would be useless to bring Christ into the school if in the streets the merchants continue to rule, the eternal merchants of national disintegration."

2. La Nacion, August 10, 1980. The newspaper article is headlined, "Calificarán los textos y el material didáctico." It describes the procedures for review of books and materials for school use. In an editorial of a later issue, a particular case of prohibition is that of an encyclopedia being sold in weekly segments. The book is prohibited for use in schools, but may be sold in the bookstores and used in the homes. The writer laments the prohibition due to a "Marxist-oriented" chapter and then states that this kind of prohibition gives ammunition to those who want Argentina to have a bad name in the world. It is noted that such review and subsequent barring is not carried out for secondary and university levels usually; it applies only to the primary schools. The complaint is offered, mildly, that in this case it should not have been done.

3. Education: Sector Policy Paper, World Bank, Washington, D. C., April 1980, Pp. 101, 119, 126.

4. de Gerulewicz, Marisa V., Castillos de Arena, Buenos Aires: Ed. Guadalupe, 1975.

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